



PRESS RELEASE

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## Standards for Europe's sustainable growth: key challenges ahead for SMEs

**Brussels, Tuesday 28 May 2019 – With sustainability as a key priority for Europe's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the fifth edition of Small Business Standards (SBS) annual conference which took place last Wednesday in Brussels focused on how SMEs could contribute to two of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Featuring key speakers from diverse business sectors with extensive standardisation expertise, this engaging conference focused on lively, interactive debates with open discussions and audience Q&As across two afternoon panels.**

With SMEs comprising over 99% of all EU businesses and the 'climate emergency' moving centre stage, now is the optimal time to examine the supporting role of standards in driving the EU in its transition towards a low-carbon, climate-neutral, resource-efficient and biodiverse economy.

The event was opened by SBS' President, Gunilla Almgren, who observed: "SMEs can contribute to delivering on the UN SDGs and standards are one of the means to do this, for instance, by making clean technological solutions accessible to all."

The conference fronted a number of speakers and stakeholders active in standardisation through European and national institutions, and businesses as diverse as soundproofing, tourism development and printing.

While the first panel focused on 'Standards and SMEs for sustainable cities and communities' linked to SDG 11, the second panel addressed the role of standards and SMEs in responsible consumption and production linked to SDG 12.

In his intervention, Andreas Schumacher, Managing Director of the German Textile Care Association DTV, stressed that in his sector, "SMEs are very much driving the sustainability agenda. However, our efforts to include circular textiles in the annex of the standard has to date proven impossible". He added, "the majority of the standards' drafters in technical Working Groups focus on the technical properties of a given product. These experts usually come from larger companies and their main role is not to look after sustainability nor to look after what the standard in the end means to the local economy. This is where SBS is playing an important role in enabling experts with another viewpoint to participate in standards drafting. Also, the public procurement tenders in my sector never make any reference to sustainability."

The event presented real-world case studies that highlighted both the realised potential of SMEs in the standardisation process, as well as hinderances to participation. As such, the two panels engaged participants and audiences alike in an informative and thought-provoking discussion on this timely issue.

[Conference pictures](#)

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**EDITORS' NOTES:** Small Business Standards (SBS) is the association representing European SMEs in the standardisation process. SBS is co-financed by the European Commission and EFTA.

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